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*Plain Truth: Or, a Representation of the real  
Cause of all our National Disappointments and  
Calamities.*

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IN A  
DISCOURSE

Occasioned by the late

GENERAL FAST;

And ADDRESSED to the *People of*  
GREAT BRITAIN.

By a CLERGYMAN of the Church of  
England.

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L O N D O N:

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These Treaties: Of a Representation of the  
Court of the National Dispensation and  
Cathedral.

# DISCOURSE

## GENERAL FAST;



By a Clergyman of the Church of  
England.



LONDON:  
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British Museum.

## EZECHIEL, Chap. vii, ver. 14.

*They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for, my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.*

**I**T is generally mentioned, as the use and commendation of history, that it serves not only to record great actions and great names, but also to make us acquainted with human nature, to bring us to the knowledge of men; or, in the modern phrase, to teach us to know the world.—And indeed this is a very valuable acquisition, when considered as a means either to excite our emulation by the worthy examples of our fore-fathers, or by a view of their oversights and mistakes to rectify our own conduct.

But, of all histories, none is comparable for utility in these respects, to those ancient records the histories of the BIBLE.

In these, we are taught to observe, not only the actions of men, but the correspondent transactions of providence; and are thereby instructed, from infallible authority, how to avoid those errors and misfortunes, which common historians leave either unsatisfactorily accounted for, or, at best, to the uncertain judgment of mere human prudence to correct.—Such, too, are the variety of incidents

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in holy writ, that, were it but studied as it ought, there could scarce any case happen for which one might not find a suitable direction in some parallel relation of the inspired writers.

Hence, what the wise man observed of this lower world, is most eminently true of the holy scriptures; and one may be bold to affirm, that as *there is nothing new under the sun*, so whoever attentively reads those sacred pages, will find nothing *new* or *unprecedented* in any period of our sublunary existence.

The words of my text are, in part, a proof of this. For, supposing EZECHIEL to have lived but in these our days—to have considered our many mighty preparations, our formidable armaments and abortive attempts; what more proper, more descriptive words could *he* have made use of, when speaking in the name of the Almighty, than these? *they have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for, my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.*

Here, indeed, though our dishonour is exactly enough described, it is yet very differently accounted for, from what we could ever expect to find it in any common historian, however faithful and precise.—The very best of these will always endeavor, in some degree, to flatter the opinions of those he writes for; and will impute every misfortune, disappointment and mistake, to any cause, rather than to the only true and original one. Accord-  
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ingly, in his account of things, we may naturally expect to read of *weak councils*, and *dishonest statesmen*; of *wrong choice*, *undue preference*, *iniquitous connections*; and *want of capacity or ability*, of *courage or integrity*, in commanders, &c. And, in this manner, we may conceive him to account for the ruinous state of our affairs; and the dejection of a *brave and honest people*.

This, it must be confessed, would be both plausible and flattering; and could not fail of being well received by those, who (for this very reason, because themselves are delinquents) would gladly fix the blame upon others.

But, all this while, the root of the matter remains untouched, and nothing is advanced which may any way direct us to a *radical* cure of our political disorders; all that has been said tending only to throw the *entire* blame on those in power.—But, these, if they must be considered as *causes* (as it is but too probable they are) are, however, but *secondary causes*; the energy of which might have been either prevented, or controuled to our advantage by the direction of providence—had we, the multitude, been less undeserving it's favorable protection,

We want not then to be put in mind, either of *our* disappointments, or *their* reproach; but to be acquainted with the *true sources*, the *real* grounds and reasons of them; that knowing

whence they spring, we may be the better enabled to prevent the occasions of them for the time to come.

Let us see then!—*We have blown the trumpet, even to make all things ready; but none goeth to the battle*—and why?—For this plain, this sufficient, this undeniable reason—because *the wrath of God is upon all the multitude thereof*.

This, after all, is what one would think we were already, in some degree, sensible of; or, our superiors would never have enjoined a day of public humiliation, nor we ourselves affect so solemn an observance of it.—But what?—Is there any charm in setting apart one day in the year for confession of our sins, and the deprecation of the divine vengeance? and do we think the Almighty *altogether such a one as ourselves*, to be pleased with outward ceremony, or appeased with a few fair words?—Truly, if we consider our *solemn fasts*, those, I mean, that are already past, together with the *inconsistency* of our *subsequent* behaviour, we may seem, in some measure, to justify the *perverse-ness* of that people, who refuse to appear *occasionally* devout, lest, with the generality, they should be thought to esteem the *necessity* of devotion likewise to be no more than *occasional*.

'Tis to the last degree disingenuous and absurd, to imagine that the solemnity of *one* or of *several* days devotion, should be sufficient to atone for a *general* and almost *continual* transgression:—or, that, bating the *solemn assembling*  
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*of ourselves together, there should not every day be as great reason for living soberly righteously and religiously according to the will of God, as for living so one day, or for several days, in obedience to a royal proclamation, or the orders of a human establishment.*

'Tis not then the want of a *specious appearance*, or of a *rigid compliance with occasional solemnities*, so much as the want of *obedience, of boliness and integrity in our habitual deportment*, which has *separated between us and our God*—has caused him to *turn his face from us*; and made his *wrath to rest upon the multitude*. 'Tis this has occasioned the trumpet to sound, *even to make all ready, while none goeth to the battle*: or, if we go, that we are made to *turn our backs upon our enemies, so that they which hate us, spoil our goods; and our enemies laugh us to scorn.*

To be convinced of this, permit me to consider a *few particulars* in our general conduct, such especially as we are most apt to censure in our *superiors*; and which, in their own nature, are most apt to contribute to the *ruin of a people*—not only as they *provoke the divine vengeance*; but as, in the common course of things, they are *subversive of every social establishment*.—

And here, what mouth is not open against a *selfish venal disposition*, and want of *public spirit*?—Is not this the cry of the *multitude*? And do we not too frequently attribute our ill success as a nation, to these things in our *governors*?—But, in the mean time, let us reflect

a little!—Are not the same *sordid vices*, the same *selfish narrow* spirits to be found (in a most *eminent* and most *notorious* degree) among the *complainers* themselves?—Do not we ourselves, look for the like pitiful gains, every one from his own quarter?—Surely, it becomes us to avoid that *opprobrium*, which we are so inconsiderately zealous in fastening upon others.—But, instead of this, do we not *daily* see that every man has his *price*? and that the virtue of individuals remains no longer, however *glaring* the appearance of it, than while it serves to support the aspirings of their ambition, and satisfy the cravings of their secret wants.—How *easily* do the most *noisy* patriots of middling and lower life, vere about, according as their private interests and connections happen to direct!—Not only a *place* or *pension*, or *lucrative* employment, but even *empty titles* (and those too, God knows! not always of the *greatest* note) nay, even a *morsel of bread* is sufficient to blind our eyes; and to make us let fall that integrity we are so *jealously* concerned to uphold in the hands of *those in power*.—Yet, if we address each singly—O what zeal! O what care for the public good! What calls for justice, for reformation, and national regard! And who but *we* for *honourable men*!—And, indeed, *such* and *so great* are the general praises and encomiums on *integrity*, that one would imagine the nation to be made up of  
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none but *patriots*; and that the *multitude thereof* were all—all *honourable men*.

Among these, however, if we durst venture to be familiar with them, we shall find, not only priests *speaking smooth things, prophesying deceits and loving the rewards of unrighteousness*; but those likewise who *invite to this, and love to have it so*: not only the *rich oppressing the poor, the higher tyrannizing over the lower*; but, even among *these lower, men devouring defrauding and circumventing one another; and hand joining in hand to strengthen themselves in their wickedness*.—Then, as to our endeavouring to *promote the prosperity of our country*, how many are there not who set themselves to do *just the reverse*?—Do the wheels of government move *slow*, how many are there not, even while they pretend to *wish well* to this our Sion, who endeavor all they can, in secret, to unhinge the *whole*, and to add affliction to the *daughter of their people*? In whose very *countenances* one may read a *malignant joy* gawz'd thinly over with expressions of concern, upon every event that arises to *trouble Israel*? Hence, that spirit of *anarchy tumult and disorder*, which has so lately stalked through the land! Hence, too, the *distraction* of our councils, and the *confusion* of our measures and regulations!

In these circumstances, the *trumpet* indeed may sound, even to *make all ready*—but, what wonder that *none goeth effectually to the battle*?

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The *wrath of God* is, evidently, upon the *multitude*—how should they prosper?

But what then, are *all gone out of the way*? are *all* combined to forward that destruction they would be thought to dread? God forbid! Yet, in the mean time, 'tis but too true, that the generality of us act as if we thus intended: a spirit of *selfishness* is gone out into the midst of the people; and an almost universal want of *public spirit* seems to be the great moral defect in the characters of all ranks and degrees of men.

Hence, all those *little tricks* and *dishonest arts* in our *common dealings* with each other! Hence it is, that *the eye of the needy fails* before the rich, and that the *poor languisheth* for bread in the midst of *plenty*.—Or, to express myself in the words of the inspired pen-men, hence are our *houses filled with violence*, and our *chambers with wrong*; and that so many grow *fat with the spoils* of the oppressed.

That these are not vain imaginations, rhetorical flourishes, or the mere declamations of a preacher; is too evident from the cries of those, who (tho' perhaps of no greater integrity themselves) are yet filling our ears with the voice of murmur and complaint.—If any, then, would deny the charge; he must first be able to prove, that even in *common trade*, in *ordinary business*, there are yet no *false balances* in the *house of the wicked*, no *bags of deceitful weights*; that there are no defrauding in our

markets, nor abomination in our streets. But, alas! who durst say thus, when the very reverse of all this is so manifestly apparent.

Instead, then, of denying, excusing, or extenuating such guilt, ought we not to take *shame* upon ourselves, and to confess that *violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness*; that the time seems, indeed, to be come, that *the buyer shall not rejoice, nor the seller return to that which is sold*; but that *wrath is upon all the multitude thereof*.—Well, then, may we demand attention of *some*, in the words of the prophet AMOS,—*Hear ye this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new-moon be gone that we may sell corn? and the sabbath; that we may set forth wheat, making the Ephah (the measure) small, and the shekel (or the price) great, and falsifying the ballances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?*

I would ask, now, do not *our hearts burn within us*, at the words of this reproach? And must not the respective consciences of many recoil upon them; and say to each—*is it not I?* If this then be the real fact with too many among us, what have we not to fear? *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* —May we not fear that *the Lord hath sworn*, as he once did, *by the excellency of Jacob, surely, I*  
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*will never forget any of their works.—Shall not the land then tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein; lest it rise up wholly as a flood, and be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt? We have, indeed, made a shew of fasting and mourning year after year; but, have we at all turned from the evil of our doings, undone the heavy burthens, or let the oppressed go free? On the contrary, we seem to have grown obstinate in our wickedness, and, by heaping transgression upon transgression, have sinned yet more against the Most High. For this, the arm of the Lord is stretched out still, and his anger is not departed from us.*

*We feed, 'tis true, upon the husks of religion; but the kernels, the more substantial duties of it (judgment mercy and truth) we set at nought. We require line upon line, and precept upon precept; and, upon fast days, especially the days of the more solemn assembly, for sermon upon sermon: yet these, if not afterwards neglected and despised, are, in the words of the prophet, only as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for we hear the words, but do them not.*

*But, farther; not only for a selfish disposition, a want of public spirit, and the dishonest arts more immediately consequent thereupon, does the land mourn; but likewise for the iniquitousness of our connections, and the undue influence we exercise over one another, to promote the*

the \* *undeserving*, to uphold transgression, to screen offenders and prevent the impartial administration of justice.—But, what—this is a charge which has been *heavily laid* upon our *superiors*—and is it to be laid likewise upon the *multitude*? upon us, who are so impatient for the *reformation* of abuses in *higher life*? Should this be thought to require an answer, seek but in the next *parish*, or the next *street*, I had almost said in the next *vestry*, and you will find, that iniquities to be *punished by the judges* are not only *connived at*, but sometimes actually *encouraged and defended*; that we not only follow the multitude to do evil, but that *evil-doers* themselves are too often *upheld* by the *multitude*. Is there any *flagrant enormity* committed, any *public injury* offered the community, provided it does not immediately and sensibly affect our personal interest, and we have a *connection* with the *delinquent*, either as a *friend*, a *neighbour*, or a *relative* of the same family, or any *interest* with him in the same profession; what *pains* are not taken, and *endeavours* used, to *secrete, excuse* or *extenuate* the offence? and even, *not seldom*, parties formed, *entirely* to exculpate the offender?

To this, in a good measure, is owing, the continuance of those public frauds already

\* By the *undeserving*, the author is presumed to mean not only those of actual ill desert, but those likewise who are destitute of proper *qualifications* and *abilities* to discharge the duties of the respective offices to which they are appointed.

complained of, which not only provoke the *divine vengeance*, but in their own nature tend to the *destruction* of every *national community*. To this, in short, are owing all those *iniquitous combinations*, that *artificial dearth*, that *infamous scarcity*, which even the *rich* must feel, and the *poor lament*; and which none but those *harpies of hell* can uphold, who *fill their bellies with their HID treasure*, while they inhumanly *suck out no small advantage* from the people, on account of *that want* which they *themselves* have occasioned.

But, besides these, other weighty accusations are brought against the men of power, and they are charged with *luxury* and *indolence*, with a spirit of *idleness* and *destructive dissipation*, which, say some, are the *cause*, and a very *sufficient cause*, of all our *public misfortunes*.—That these vices are extravagantly indulged, to the neglect of every salutary measure for the public welfare, is *too true* to be denied;—and that these, of themselves, are a *very sufficient cause* of our miscarriages in public affairs, must be likewise allowed.

But, in the mean time, how do the *multitude*, how do *we ourselves* behave, under a *sense* of these things?—While the *envied great ones* spend their fortunes in *vice* and *extravagance*, do *we* enjoy ours with *temperance*? or employ them in *doing good* to those around us? Do we retrench all *unnecessary* and *vicious expence*, in order to maintain our *own families* and relieve those

those those that are *in want*? Are we as *assiduous* and *industrious* as we ought in our respective callings, while we blame the *indolence* and *inactivity* of those *above us*?—And while we censure that spirit of *gaming* and *dissipation* that appears in *others*, are not many of us involved, as far as our *bumbler* connections will admit, in the same *baneful* practices, and under the *like* condemnation! And, as an incontestible proof that we are *really* so, are we not *somewhat* offended, *somewhat* hurt at the mention of it?

Yet, suffer we thus far! at least, in this place: considering that *plain truth* is not frequently to be met with, or attended to, *elsewhere*. Well indeed would it be, if in *any place*, or at *any time*, these things were *properly laid to heart*:—but what hopes of this, while *prophaneness* and *irreligion* assume the seat of scorners?—And here again is *another* of the demerits of *high life*, *another cause* of *public misfortunes*.—But, alas! how *strongly* does it not operate likewise among those of *all conditions*, even to the *lowest class*?—Are not senseless *oaths* and blasphemous *execrations*, *foolish filthy* and *prophane* jestings, to be met with among *persons* of *all ranks*, *inferiors* as well as *superiors*? And for *inattention*, *impatience*, *disgust* and *neglect* in *religious matters*, are there not even *plowmen* on a level with their *bettors*?

All this is not said with the least design to *exculpate* the *higher orders* of men, of whom,  
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as much is given them, much is and will be required—but only to *remind* us, that since *we* ourselves know so well what is *right* and *wrong* in the conduct of *others*, we should be careful to *amend our own*.—This is our own *proper concern*; our own *more immediate province*. We may frequently command and order our *own doings*; but the actions of *others* are not *often* in our power: nay, if they were, it would signify *little* to the prosperity of those, the generality of whom would *still* neglect to reform *themselves*. It must be a *general, a national REFORMATION*, which alone can produce a *general and national PROSPERITY*. Indeed the religion and virtue even of a *few* individuals, may, sometimes, *respite* the destruction of a community, through the *special mercy* and favour of providence. But, yet, when *irreligion* and vice are once *epidemical*, the *worst* evils may justly be feared; as, in that case, the *wrath* of God must needs be *upon the multitude thereof*. On the contrary, were once the *bulk of the people* reformed; as many, at least, as are wise enough to see the faults of their *superiors*; we might soon expect that the *Almighty*, in whose hands are the *hearts of kings*, by whom *kings reign and princes decree justice*, would then take the matter into his hands, and teach our *senators wisdom*.

Let us remember, that *there is no wisdom, no understanding nor counsel against the Lord*; and instead of *putting our trust in princes, or in any*

*any child of man, instead of making flesh our arm, or confiding even in the wisest counsels of the most sagacious and popular Abithophel; let us, by our future behaviour, endeavor to render HIM propitious, who alone is counsel and sound wisdom, and understanding and strength.*

Then we need not fear the multitude of the nations round about, though *the kings of the earth stood up, and the princes took counsel together against us; the lord of hosts would be with us, the God of Jacob would be our refuge.*—Then would our fear our confusion and reproach be turned upon our enemies: *a thousand should flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five should they flee.*—At least, *from the blood of the slain our swords would not return empty; nor our commanders any more inglorious.*

In the mean time, would we have reformation above! Are we desirous of *able ministers, honest statesmen, men of honour and integrity,* let us *ourselves* endeavor to furnish *such* to our country's service!—Let our youth be so *instructed, principled, and educated,* as that some in *higher, some in lower* life, may all be *useful* members of the commonwealth, and contribute *all they can* to the *prosperity* of their people. Let them be so *carefully and thoroughly* instructed in the ways of virtue and religion, that they may learn, always, *sincerely* to esteem and practice both; so *disciplined and trained,* in the paths of *obedience and integrity,* that the *rising* generation may make *some amends,* at least,  
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for the *depravity* of their *fathers*.—But, even this will be impracticable, unless we *immediately* reform *ourselves*, and correct *those examples* which we have *too frequently* set before them.—This, once *earnestly* set about, we shall find the *work prosper in our hands*; and the *success of our endeavors* to be proportionable to our *wishes*.

That such a *particular* reformation of individuals in *private* life, would necessarily have a very *happy influence* on our *public* as well as *private* concerns;—would remove the *wrath* of God from *the multitude*; and *effectually* invite his mercy to *pardon, bless* and *prosper* us, as a people, is evident even from the *natural* tendency of things.—Whence, for instance, are *princes* taken? whence are *lords* created, *ministers* chosen, *commanders* appointed, and *soldiers* raised?—Is it not from among the PEOPLE?

Let then but the PEOPLE reform *themselves*, and *persevere* in such reformation; and we may hope to see such a *constant supply* of *fit* and *able* and *honest* men, in the several *offices* *places* and *employments* of life; as will not only be an *honour* to our *government*, but a *bulwark* to the *nation*.

A people thus reformed, instead of taking *delight* to *blacken* the character of their *superiors*, debasing their credit in order to exalt their own, would learn to *reverence* their  
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worth; brighten their own virtues, and share in their deserts.

This is a change, so *absolutely* necessary to recover ourselves from that *ruinous* state into which we are fallen as a nation; that, without it, (however *romantic* and *impracticable* it may seem to be effected) we appear, in *sober truth*, to be an *undone people*, ripe for vengeance, and *devoted* to destruction.

But, to proceed: as we have hitherto seen, that the *true* and *original* source of all our *public* misfortunes and disappointments, are our *vices* *iniquities* and *ill-deserts* as a people; as these, in a *natural*, as well as *judicial* way, must occasion the *wrath* of God to be *upon all the multitude thereof*; and as we have, actually, hitherto, *sounded the trumpet* in vain, and *made all ready*, while *none goeth*, to any purpose, *to the battle*; the great question that remains to be resolved, is plainly *this*—by *what means* we may remove those evils from among us; and, by a *general*, *actual* and *lasting* amendment, may secure the *favour* of God; engage him to *pardon our* past offences, to turn on *our side*, and to send, not his *wrath*, but his *blessing upon the multitude*?

But, here, methinks, I perceive myself prevented, by the remonstrances of those, who, willing to shift the blame from themselves, are desirous that those in *high life* should lead the way to *that reformation*, which they themselves are *unwilling* to begin.

To hear such persons talk, one would be tempted to imagine, that *religion* and *virtue* were no more than (what they are too often esteemed) a mere kind of *outward garment*; which it would be unfit to appear in, while *out of fashion*, and exploded by the *polite world*. And hence it is, that men put on the appearance of *penitents*, just as they go into *public mourning*; not so much out of regard to *authority* or *regret* for the *deceased*, as because it is *fashionable* and *genteel*.—But, in the mean time, it would be well; if, instead of being so *exceedingly* ceremonious and *well bred*, in matters of such *great*, such *universal* concern; we would learn to be a *little* more *sincere*, a *little* more *heartly*—if instead of waiting for the reformation of our *superiors*, or needing the sanction of *their* examples, to be honest and upright (which by the way rather betrays *interestedness* than discovers *integrity*) we would *ourselves* set about *practising* social virtues, *reforming* our private conduct, and *amending* each one himself; we should find, by a *happy experience*, a very *sensible* alteration in our *prosperity* as well as *morals*: and, however unworthy a *few great ones* of the earth might be, they would, at least, be restrained by the *shame* of the *multitude* from their more *public* enormities; and, like the scribes and chief priests of old, would learn to *fear*, to *reverence* the PEOPLE.

Now the *natural* consequence of this would be, that in the choice of our *representatives*,

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our magistrates, public officers, commanders and the like, both governors and governed would unite in countenancing and promoting the worthy, and in discountenancing and degrading the unworthy.—Instead of party clamour, and mere titled-pretensions, MERIT, true and unaffected MERIT (ever modestly reluctant) would then be set up to public esteem and shine in public view. No longer should we see any dishonourable prostitution in high life, nor any base or unmanly servility in low.—So far otherwise, that ambition would, then, yield to integrity, dissipation to diligence, private interest to the love of our country, effeminacy to manly courage, and discontent to obedience.—In a word, virtue would triumph over vice, and religion prevail over prophaneness and impiety; and the \* abominations of the town would no longer be exported to infect the country.

—If then so much depends upon the amendment of individuals in private life, and if such and so great would be the effects of general reformation, (for, an absolutely universal one, however desirable, is too much to be expected) it must surely be a secret well worth enquiry, by what means it may be effected.—Nor are these

\* The abominations here complained of, as exported into the country, can surely be nothing new; unless, perhaps, they were intended to denote card playing, &c. on Sundays: but 'tis hardly credible, that people of fashion would thus run the hazard of having their peculiar seasons of diversion vulgariz'd, unless they intend shortly to change them.

altogether so difficult, discouraging, or impracticable, as we, at first, may be apt to imagine. —On the contrary, the prescription is short, easy and natural: and if it at all seem otherwise, it can be only to those, who are almost past feeling, or totally irrecoverable. In a word, 'tis no more than this—a proper degree of the LOVE and FEAR of God.—These are principles, which if once duly entertained, would infallibly influence our conduct, and be productive of that national amendment we shall otherwise wish for in vain.

Whoever considers, that 'tis the Almighty alone that presides over all the kingdoms of the earth; that he pulleth down one and setteth up another; and that he often bringeth it to pass, that one wicked nation is stirred-up to execute vengeance upon another; and that to this purpose he raiseth up the ungodly to be his ministers of wrath against the workers of iniquity— whoever considers this, must needs be convinced, that he alone can defeat our counsels, blast our designs and confound our most subtle devices, even against the most injurious attempts of our enemies—that 'tis he who can make our young men faint by the way, and our old men to lack wisdom for the war: and, in a word, that 'tis he and none but he, who, for our manifold impieties and crying abominations, has caused us to hear the voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. On the other hand, whoever considers what our ears have heard, and our fathers

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*have told us (not only what God hath done in their days and in the old times before them—how he cast out the nations and planted us in—but also) how frequently, mercifully and almost miraculously, he hath since defended us, and rescued us from the hands of our enemies, who, at different times, and on every side, have attempted to subvert our excellent constitution both in church and state, and to deprive us of every thing valuable both in our religious and civil liberties—whoever, I say, considers these things, cannot but find reason to lament our monstrous ingratitude, for so many, and so great, such repeated and undeserved blessings.*

The least ingenuous disposition, one would imagine, would have been sufficient to make us love the Lord our God, who hath *already*, and so frequently, done such great things for us; and have caused us to draw near to him, in the most constant assiduous and sincere obedience to his laws. In this manner might we reasonably be thought to demean ourselves towards him, who alone has thus, often, shewn himself the rock of our strength and our mighty deliverer.

As to the mercies of OUR REDEMPTION, the means of grace and the hope of glory, these (tho' beyond comparison, the far greatest obligations we have to the great supreme Lord of heaven and earth) seem, I am sorry to say it, too remote and spiritualized, to make any sensible impression on our minds; and appear only to be blessings which we have long since learnt to acknowledge  
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with our lips, while we neglect them in our lives; though we cease not, in the mean time, to be very zealous for modes of faith, external profession, and forms of worship.—Thus, while we call ourselves protestants, and profess the truth in theory, we remain almost as unreformed in practice as the most deluded and diabolical papist; and perhaps more so, than many of the heathen.

Mean while however, were we indeed reformed, were we protestants indeed, and such as we would be thought, how different should we not appear!—How much better should we not be!—If the love of God were indeed shed abroad in our hearts, did it rule, guide, direct and influence us as it ought; and did we, in fact, cherish and encourage it within us, what a different people should we not be!—what a different scene of things—what an amendment should we not experience!—No narrow views, no sinister intentions would then be set on foot, or direct our conduct—no frauds or combinations in private life, nor iniquitous measures in public; no lurking arts to defraud the public revenue; nor selfish schemes to embezzle the public money: on the contrary, with a single eye, a single hand, and a single heart, we should all render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's.

As we should then act under a constant sense of the inspection of an all-seeing God, and with a sincere intention to recommend ourselves, in his sight, to his favor and protection; whatever might

might be our calling, occupation, office or employment, we should still direct all to his glory; and, by that means, to the advantage and prosperity of ourselves and others.—They that rule would rule with diligence; they that obey, would be, not as eye servants, mercenary time-servers or mere men-pleasers, but as the servants of God. In this situation, what might we not hope, what might we not expect!—The blessing of the most high would second our endeavors; and our endeavors themselves, tend naturally to secure and promote that blessing. No longer should we sound the trumpet in vain, even to make all ready. Our hosts would then go out to the battle with a shout, and return with songs of triumph; and the wrath of God would cease from the multitude.—The generality of us, thus actuated by the love of the most high, and returned to the paths of obedience, we might then not unreasonably expect, that the Lord would set us on high above all nations on earth; that we should be blessed in all that we put our hands unto—in the city, and in the field; in the fruit of our bodies, and in the fruit of our grounds; in the fruit of our cattle, the increase of our kine, and the flocks of our sheep; in our basket and our store, in our coming-in and going-out. And then might we hope that the Lord would cause our enemies that rise up against us, to be smitten before our face; and that, when they are come out against us one way, they should flee seven ways.

Hitherto

Hitherto the LOVE of God has been proposed, as *one of the only two expedients*, to save us from *impending ruin*; and *this* deservedly claimed the *first* mention, as being the *first* and *most generous* principle that can actuate a *reasonable* soul; not only as it implies *gratitude* towards our *greatest* benefactor, *affection* towards the *best*, and *reverence* towards the *greatest* of all beings, but, likewise, as it excludes all *low* and *mercenary* considerations; and turns our thoughts towards our *own unworthiness*, and the *amazing goodness*, the *great* and *wonderful mercies* already vouchsafed us, were it only our *continuance and preservation in life*.

But, lest there should be *some* among us, of less ingenuous dispositions, who instead of being bound by the *corde of love*, stand in need of the *terrors of the lord* to awaken their attention, and compel them to return—let it be observed, *farther*, that if they *will not*, or *cannot yet love* him, they at least ought to *fear* him.—If they cannot yet return to him, with their *whole heart*, nor take *delight* or *complacency* in his ways; let them, at least, turn to him in *fear*; and *tremble at his word*.

And, indeed, 'tis *high time*—when his *wrath* is so *visibly* upon the *multitude*—visible, not only by stirring up *formidable* and *successful enemies* against us round about, but in the *infatuation* of our *counsels*, the *inexertion* of our *strength*, and the *inglorious* returns of our *proudest* armaments.—*visible* too, in that spirit of  
tumult

*tumult and disorder, those arts of rapine and oppression, that mortality murrain and dearth, which we hear every where complained of; and which there want not wretches to promote, by diminishing the staff of life, if not poisoning it with their adulterations.*

Surely, all this is enough to *alarm* us, those especially whose hope lies chiefly before them; and whose most *anxious* desires are after the things of *this life*.—If, then, we are not moved at these things, we must needs confess, that even the *stubborn Jews, the backsliding children of Israel*, were less *stupid* than we: for when God slew them, or smote them with any plague or trouble; then, at least, they sought him, and enquired early after God—they REMEMBERED that God was their strength, and that the High God was their redeemer.

Fear, 'tis true, as it signifies *dread* or *alarm*, is a very *ungenerous*, a very *unwelcome* guest: yet is it altogether natural in the midst of *danger*; especially of *such danger* as we have not power, of ourselves, to avoid.

To speak, indeed, of our *eternal* interests, or of the mere concerns of the *public*, of the ruin of our *happy constitution*, and the *salvation* of our *souls*, would make but *small* impression on the minds of those, who are only to be moved by the considerations of things *present* and *sensible*; and have been accustomed to fear *natural* miseries only, the mere *pains of sense* and *calamities of the body*.—Well, then, if *bodily*

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sufferings

*sufferings—if want, sickness, disease and death are the only things we are wont to dread—let them, at least, awaken our fear of HIM, who is the sole original dispenser of them; and teach us at once, to fear him who can kill the body; and also, after that, can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Now, the evils we have, hitherto, felt in *private life*, however great to *some* individuals, however matter of complaint in *general*, are *nothing* in comparison of those, which the Almighty may yet inflict upon us even in *this* world.—The sword has not yet reached our borders, neither are our young men slain therewith; our strong-holds are not yet set on fire, nor our children dashed against the stones in the midst of us.—But, how much reason soever we may have to think that *none of these* things may befall us—is it as *clear*, is it as *improbable*, that earthquakes pestilence or famine shall not destroy us?—The first of these we, not long since, had a dreadful example of, in a neighbouring nation; as well as some earlier warnings of, in our own. And as to sickness and plague, how easily, how naturally may they not arise in a time of general scarcity and dearth.—If the Almighty should continue to permit the *beasts of the field to be consumed*, and cause the *herbs of the field to wither for the wickedness of those that dwell in the land*—or, should the *wickedness of those that dwell in the land still go on to make the eyes of the needy to fail*, and withhold the *provision*

*sion of bread from the hungry; ask, now, the physician; and he will tell thee—what calamitous disorders may thence arise; disorders infectious epidemical and mortal; such as may cause thousands to fall beside one, and ten-thousand at one's right hand!—Thus, among innumerable other methods, may the Almighty display his vengeance, to punish a guilty land; to punish it even with it's own inventions; while the oppressor and the oppressed fall down together, and the chastisement of the people shall go forth with a curse on the head of him that withholdeth the corn.*

*Will ye not then fear me, saith the Lord, will ye not tremble at my word?—My judgments are already abroad, will ye not yet learn righteousness?*

Indeed, could we but once be brought to fear God, and to stand in awe of his judgments, we should be naturally led-on to obedience; to avoid his displeasure by keeping back from transgression, and to be solicitous to do those things that are right.—The consequence of this would be *prosperity and peace*: and, unless we, afterwards, should be monstrously ungrateful indeed, we should go on from one degree of strength to another, and from dreading his vengeance, should learn to adore his mercy; and to love and obey HIM with our whole heart, who would thus have shewed himself gracious—a ready help in time of trouble.

Mean while, amazing it is, that we of this nation, in particular, should need so much en-

treaty, so many arguments and repeated persuasions, to love and fear God, and to keep his commandments!—we, who have had so many and so great deliverances to be thankful for, that hardly the history of any nation (that of the Israelites excepted) can furnish any thing parallel, either as to the frequency, surprisings, or importance of them.

Had we, like the heathen, but few means of knowing and practising our duty—had we only maimed defective or fallible rules to go by—or had we a less clear revelation of the divine will, than that which now lies before us for our instruction; something might possibly be said, to extenuate our guilt, and account for our amazing depravity.—But, nothing of this kind can be suggested in our behalf.—We all know, or may know, the several duties required of us; may be all instructed, and assisted in the discharge of them; and have, all, the same glorious and unspeakable hopes to animate our obedience—the constant and endless favor of God; the assistance of his blessed spirit here, and the ineffable joys the permanent and unmixt felicities of his presence hereafter.

The scriptures are open to the view and bearing of ALL: the word is not hid from the people, or locked up in an unknown tongue, as it is among those of the church of Rome. And the terms of our acceptance, the conditions of our salvation are plain and intelligible to the meanest understanding.—No longer does God require pompous ceremonies, burthensome rites, or costly sacrifices;

*sacrifices*; but, in the most *absolute sense* of the words, *all* that the Lord our God now requires of us, in order to secure his favor, *to see good days, and to enter into life eternal, is to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.*

But, the misfortune is, that we either *totally* neglect those *sacred* pages, *the words of eternal life*; or read them only with a careless indifference, without making the *least application* of them to ourselves. Whereas, when we set about perusing the works of those inspired pen-men, we should consider, with St. PAUL, that they were intended for *doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness*; and that all the *actions and events* which are there recorded, were recorded for *our example and admonition.*

The BIBLE, being, as before observed, a *history of providence*, in which, not only the *actions of men*, but the *dispensations* of the Almighty are described, together with his several *motives* of acting; we should be careful, so far to accommodate them to the things of *our own times*, as to compare the several *remarkable* events that occur *at present*, with those which came to pass in those *earlier days*; and thence, endeavor to discover the most *probable causes* of those calamities which may, at any time, *threaten or overtake* us. In doing thus, we shall find, that *obedience* to the divine commands, and *integrity* of manners, were ever attended with national success and prosperity; and that *disobedience* and *looseness* of morals, *constantly*

stantly brought down the *wrath* of God upon the multitude; stirred-up their enemies round about, and brought upon the people, the *sword*, the *pestilence* and the *famine*, according to the aggravation of their offences, and the indignation of their God.—And, though the Israelites were, indeed, more immediately under a *theocracy* or *divine government*, and that the Almighty was their *king* as well as God, the supreme *political* governor of the people; yet, (nay, for that *very* reason) may their history serve to teach us *the way of the Lord*; and incline us to consider the *method* of his judgments and his dealings, in his *moral* government over the *sons of men*.

In fact, he, who considers ever so little, must acknowledge, that almost *every* thing which may be esteemed a *reverse* of fortune to our nation, springs from the like sources as those from which the scripture derives the *national* calamities of the *Jewish* people.—Agreeably hereto, the observation of *Achior*, a captain of *Holofernes*, on the *Jews*, may not improperly be applied to ourselves:—*while they departed not from their God, they prospered; because the God that bateth iniquity was with them. But, when they departed from the way which he appointed them, they were destroyed in many battles very sore; and were led captives in a land that was not theirs; and the temple of their God was cast to the ground, and their cities were taken by the enemies.*

And what then, can we expect, when all these things are disregarded; and when we  
still

still continue blindly in the *error of our ways*, in the *monstrous* iniquities and *vicious* dissipations, before mentioned?

It was the enquiry of the wise son of Sirach — *How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks?* And may it not, with equal propriety, be demanded — *How can they attend to judgment, understand wise counsel, or utter the sentence of wisdom in debate, that follow after pleasures, that glory in the spur, that cheer the dogs and are occupied in their sports, and whose talk is of horses?* How can he face danger, whose hope is on earth? or look death in the face, who sees no Heaven beyond it? How can he be honest, that followeth after rewards; or he seek fame, that loveth gifts? And, in a word, how shall he deserve honour, that neglecteth his God, and despiseth that praise which endureth for ever!

Yet after all, *such is the case with too many among us* — not among those in *high life only*, but also among *us*, their seemingly more worthy CENSURERS; among *all ranks of people*, even among *all the multitude thereof*. God grant, however, that the *time past may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have walked according to the course of this world!* — God grant that we may be wise in time — that we may consider and lay to heart, and amend the evil of our doings! Who can tell, but God may then turn and repent, and turn  
away

away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? Who knoweth, but that he will yet return and be gracious; and leave a blessing behind him? To this purpose, let us, in the mean time, address him with the deepest humility, in the words of the pious, as well as politic *Judith*!—

Behold, Lord! the *Assyrians* are multiplied in their power—they are exalted with horse and man—they glory in the strength of their footmen.—They trust in shield and spear, and bow and sling; and know not that thou art the Lord, that breakest the battles. The Lord is thy name!—Throw down their strength in thy power! and bring down their force in thy wrath! For, they have purposed to defile thy sanctuary, and to pollute thy tabernacle, where thy glorious name resteth; and to cast down, with the sword, the horn of thy altar. Behold their pride, and send thy wrath upon their heads!—Thy power standeth not in multitude, nor thy might in strong men: for, thou art the helper of the oppressed, an upholder of the weak, a protector of the forlorn, a Saviour of them that are without hope.—We pray thee, O God of our fathers! and God of the inheritance of *Israel*! Lord of the heavens and earth, creator of the waters, King of every creature, hear thou our prayer! and make every nation and tribe to acknowledge, that thou art the God of all power and might; and that there is none other that protecteth the people of *Israel*, but THOU.

To whom, Father Son and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c. Amen!

4. OC 58

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